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THE WORKER'S WEAPON

JOHN HENRY ELLIOTT

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THE WORKER'S WEAPON

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Suggestive Outline Bible Studies

Notes and Suggestions for Bible Readings

Teaching Outlines for Workers' Training Classes

etc.

Sincerely Yours
John Henry Elliott

The Worker's Weapon

ITS
PERFECTION
AUTHORITY
STUDY
AND USE

By JOHN HENRY ELLIOTT

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INTRODUCTION

IN these days, when the old Book, which is the "sword of the Spirit," is being attacked on every side, it is refreshing to lay hold upon a book such as these words introduce. The author is not a stranger to the young people who love to study God's Word. He has been a leader of young men for more than a decade of years, and in all that time has proved himself a "workman that needeth not to be ashamed." He knows men well, but he knows his Bible better.

The following pages are the outgrowth of his special study and labor as an evangelist during the past year. All would be better workers, and all would be better able to handle the "Spirit's sword," if this book should be prayerfully studied. It is my great pleasure to give both it and its author my heartiest God-speed, and most fervent prayer for its wide circulation.

J. WILBUR CHAPMAN.

ALBANY, N. Y., July 27, 1894.

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"Blessed are they that are perfect in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord."—Psalm cxix. 1 (R. V.).

THE WORKER'S WEAPON

ITS PERFECTION

"The entrance of thy words giveth light: it giveth understanding unto the simple."—Psalm cxix. 130.

Cap I

ITS PERFECTION

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."—Psalm xix. 7–8.

THE word "law," as used in this instance, may be taken to mean the same as the word "doctrine" or "teaching," as used elsewhere. The claim or statement here made is a broad and conclusive one: "The law of the Lord is perfect." No explanation is offered or argument used. The writer simply

states the fact, and therefore makes no apology and offers no proof. We little question its absolute truth, as applied to the New Testament Scriptures; but if it is to be taken as meaning what the words suggest, it must be that its truth applies to all God's law, doctrine, or teaching. Whether through prophets, singers, apostles, or his own Son, this collection of teachings, then, is more than a mere book, a human book, or even a divine book. A book it may be in convenience; it is, nevertheless, a library in breadth and importance—the perfect Word of God in authority, throwing light on the path of history, and making plain the way of life. Not a single vital principle of godliness is omitted, but in one form or another the law of the Lord reveals and pro-

claims, explains and enforces every needed truth. It will be helpful, then, to dwell for a little time on:

First, *The Perfection of its Unity.*

Over forty writers were engaged for about fourteen hundred years in giving to the world these teachings. They lived in different countries, used various languages, and employed many methods, but the result of their work is one—a unit; so that in this collection of teachings we find many writers, but one Author; many writings, but one Book. All these teachings have one central truth: "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." No wonder that elsewhere the Psalmist breaks forth into these words: "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." Surely it is a magnificent book, translated into

nearly four hundred tongues, or fifty more than any other book in the world. The only book approaching it in this regard is the "Pilgrim's Progress," and one has not far to look for the reason, since the book referred to is made up almost wholly of direct and indirect quotations from the Word of God. As one has said: "This Bible of ours has been 'exploded' a great many times, and yet the particles of it always seem to come together again in the form of more Bibles. It has been 'blown up' only to alight on all-fours and run through the earth faster than ever. It has been upset only to prove it a solid cube, presenting the same strength and size as before." Indeed, it is very like the Irishman's fence of which the story tells us:

An Irishman was found down in

Kentucky building a fence four feet high and four feet thick. Some one asked him why he was wasting so much good material in thus building a fence. He replied: "Sure, because if the wind blows it over it will be just as high as it was before." And so I am not at all disturbed at the fierce criticisms to which this collection of teachings has been subjected. Nothing can affect its real unity or disturb its solidity. We are often told that it is old-fashioned and out of date to admit the perfection of these teachings and their complete unity. Out of date because old? This does not follow of necessity. Some of the oldest things are the most stable. The old sun may be very ancient, but is, nevertheless, stable and secure. No matter how men may theorize about it,

or the blind man disbelieve in its existence, it nevertheless shines on, giving warmth, light, and life to all.

Second, *The Perfection of its Adaptation to Human Needs.*

This collection of teachings is suited alike to rich and poor, to the learned and unlearned. When I was in Saratoga, a friend gave me an incident which aptly illustrates this truth:

In my friend's early ministry, a colored boy who had given considerable trouble in the Sunday-school was happily converted to Christ. Shortly after, in a meeting of young people for thanksgiving and testimony, this same colored boy arose in his place, opened a large-sized Bible, and slowly and carefully turned to Genesis, first chapter, first verse, and began to read in a very hesi-

tating fashion, as if it was exceedingly difficult for him to spell out and pronounce the words: "In—the—beginning—God—created—the—heaven—and—the—earth. And—the—earth—was—without—form, and—void; and—darkness—was—upon—the—face—of—the—deep. And—the—Spirit—of—God—moved—upon—the—face—of—the—waters. And—God—said, Let—there—be—light: and—there—was—light." Then closing the Book very deliberately, he said: "That's it! I was in darkness, but God spoke, and there was light." This boy, in his honesty, after having given his heart to Christ, had evidently intended to undertake to read the Bible through, but as soon as he came to this passage a flood of light shone in upon him, by the

teaching of the Holy Spirit, and he saw a great truth.

It may be very well for the scholar in his study, for the learned man in his laboratory, to dream of methods for elevating the human race; but when one comes in close contact with illiterate, ignorant men, what shall he carry to them?

Suppose I go to a company of laboring-men with a copy of the most approved volume of ethics under my arm. Do you suppose that Patrick, leaning on his shovel, would listen very long to my reading a ponderous chapter from the book? I imagine he would look at me in utter amazement, and possibly say, "Well, what does it all mean?" But suppose, instead, I go to him with the old Bible, and read to him the

words, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Do you not know that, somehow or other, that truth would fit itself into his needs, and he would be apt to say, as in actual experience I know it has often happened, "Read it over again: that is what I want to know about"? Then, too, the greatest men have had the deeper longings of their intellectual desires satisfied in this collection of teachings as in no other. It is said of Dr. Kennicott, whose learning is unquestioned, and who spent thirty years in collating the Old Testament Scriptures, on the morning after he had finished his task, when his wife asked the question: "Now, doctor, that your great task is ended, what shall

we read for recreation?" after hesitating for a moment, he answered: "Wife, let us begin on the Bible." Yes, it is indeed suited alike to old and young, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, and meets the needs of the human soul, not only in its intellectual outreaching, but in its devotional and recreative moods as well.

Third, *The Perfection of its Teachings.*

So simple and yet so profound, the teachings of this Book command attention at once. It states the truth as a fact. It is nowhere apologetic or vacillating. The most stupendous truths are given without argument or proof to establish their veracity or authority. "It is written" is enough. We could have no better illustration of this

than in the temptation of our Lord, where, in meeting the great adversary on the Mount, four times over he appealed "to the law and testimony" in these words: "It is written," or "It is written again." This is surely the secret of his speaking "as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Despite the caviling of critics or the objections of skeptics, or even the indifferent position too often of its professed friends, the Word of God nevertheless demonstrates in actual use the perfection of its teaching concerning those things about which men are most completely at sea.

A young man with no very great learning or ability, but with an earnest desire to help his fellow-men, engaged in conversation with a commercial traveler on a railroad train. And as soon

as this man found out he was a Christian, he put to him this question: "Are you a minister of the gospel?" The young man answered: "No, sir." "You are one of these Y. M. C. A. fellows, then, are you not?" he asked. And the young man replied: "Yes, sir, I am." The commercial traveler continued: "I have often desired to ask some of you ministers or Y. M. C. A. men a question or two. Have you any objection to my asking you?" The young man replied: "I have no objection whatever. All I ask is that you will not be put out with me if I am unable to satisfactorily answer your questions." "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is divine, and equal with God the Father?" said the commercial traveler. This was a difficult question for the young man

to answer; but taking a small Bible out of his pocket, he turned at once to the first chapter of John's Gospel, and read from the first to the third verses, and said: "Yes, sir, this refers to Jesus Christ and states distinctly that he was divine, and equal with the Father even in creation. I believe it, because it is God's testimony." Looking him squarely in the face for a moment or two, the commercial traveler said: "Well, sir, there is no argument about that." "Oh, no," replied the young man; "argument is unnecessary. It is the simple statement of God's Word, and I believe it. And what is more, I am satisfied from personal experience that it is true." After a pause he said to the young man: "Do you know anything about astronomy?" And the young fellow said at once:

"Very little; I know something about it." "Then you know there are worlds on worlds besides ours, and that some of them may possibly be inhabited." The young man deemed this a possibility. Then said the commercial traveler: "Do you really believe, with this in view, that God would send his only begotten Son down into this world of ours to save a few—a handful of sinners?" Again the young man turned to his Bible, and after reading John iii. 16, said: "I certainly do, for it is the distinct statement of Jesus Christ himself, and I believe his testimony."

This may seem to some of our learned friends as a very insignificant method of meeting a man who had given a great deal of thought to these serious questions, as he regarded them; but under

the blessing of the Spirit it was used in turning this man's attention to the things of God; and the worker had the joyful assurance of some day, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, meeting this man face to face in the kingdom of God.

Let us now notice some of the suggestions of the text, as to the fourfold action of this wonderful and perfect law of God in its contact with individuals.

1. "*Converting the soul*" (verse 7).

This law not only condemns, but converts. It is a great comfort that over against the condemnation of the law of God there is always placed the comforting assurance of pardon through the gift of Jesus Christ. As illustrating this, take one statement which is but a sample of hundreds of others: "For

the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." What a blessed thing it is that when the worker goes with his weapon—the law of God—he not only has that which will teach men the enormity of sin and the consequences thereof, but at the same time the remedy for sin, and the blessedness of appropriating it!

2. "*Making wise the simple*" (verse 7).

What a wonderful educator is the Lord's sure testimony! This is the true culture for civilization, and the true instruction for simple souls who want to honor the Master in aggressive service.

I once knew a Scotch sailor who was converted to Christ while attempting to repair the steeple of a church. In some way or other the scaffolding gave

way and he was precipitated into a position where he was unable to extricate himself. Expecting every moment to be dashed to death, he was led to hastily review his life, and, turning his face Godward, to give himself at once into the care of a merciful, patient, and sin-pardoning God. By almost a miracle he was rescued, and began at once a study of the English Bible. He was a simple soul in many respects, and, while lacking the advantages of an early education, he made rapid progress in acquiring a knowledge of spiritual things; so that after a while he gave such evidence of genuine ability that the presbytery could not refuse to lay their hands upon him in ordination. One incident in his life illustrates his use of the Word of God. During a

series of revival meetings in a certain city, a couple of bright college students, who were spending their vacation in the city, came into one of the meetings and remained to the after-meeting. A bright, finely educated young minister met them and sought to deal with them. He was familiar with their position and tried to answer their questions with philosophical arguments, but without avail. After trying on one or two occasions to meet them, he gave the matter up in discouragement. I saw my little Scotch friend go to them, and when they began to bring forth their special difficulties he simply opened his Bible and said, "I don't understand these things very well, but I do know what the Word of God teaches." So, answering their questions in this way, this

simple soul was enabled to lead them both to the feet of the Saviour; and in a very few minutes I saw all three of them kneel together, and afterward had the joy of knowing that these two young men had given their lives to Christ.

3. "*Rejoicing the heart*" (verse 8).

There is no joy except along the lines of right living. Many have a superficial happiness, but no real joy. And I believe the Psalmist must have had this idea in mind, under the direction of the Spirit, when in the One Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm, 165th verse, he gave expression to this thought: "Great peace have they who love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." This is the secret of the rejoicing heart. How often the indwelling Spirit brings back some of the statutes of the Lord, com-

mitted to memory in childhood, to the hearts of the aged, so bringing joy!

4. "*Enlightening the eyes.*"

Do you want right views of life? Look at it from God's standpoint. How often people say, "I cannot realize I am such a sinner"! The only method to surely do this is to use God's mirror. This is the illustration used in the Epistle of James, chapter i., verse 25: "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." So long as Job looked at his condition through human eyes he tried to justify himself; but, at the last, he says: "Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I

beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Oh for spiritual enlightenment! Not temporal help, but opened eyes, is what the world needs to-day. As in the case of Bartimeus, what men need is not silver but sight.

THE WORKER'S WEAPON

ITS AUTHORITY

"Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."—Psalm cxxxviii. 2.

"Holding fast the faithful word."—Titus i. 9.

Cap II

ITS AUTHORITY

"When Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."—Matt. vii. 28, 29.

THE divine authority of the New Testament Scriptures is generally admitted. Some question this matter of authority in connection with the Old Testament. Many who put an interrogation-point after much in both the Old and New Testament nevertheless take the Sermon on the Mount as authentic,

without stopping to consider that this discourse of our Lord's is full of Old Testament truth. The Beatitudes are founded on thoughts taken from the Psalms, and the teachings which follow cover a large field of truth in the prophets and the Psalms. I suppose one reason why it is said "they were astonished" at the teachings of Jesus is because, as the original, divine law-giver and expounder, he was speaking as one declaring facts. However, there is a contrast indicated here which it is well for us to notice: "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." It was the business of the scribes to expound the law; but I imagine that it had grown to be a mere perfunctory matter with them—so much so, indeed, that they had come to attach

quite as great importance to the traditions of the elders as to the definite, clear statements of Scripture. Very likely they had drifted into the habit that some of our modern teachers seem to have adopted, of giving the views of three or four of the learned rabbis and leaving the people to decide which was correct. I believe that this is always a dangerous and misleading method. It is well illustrated by the advice given a young man by an old colored mammy on one of the Southern plantations. He desired to find a short cut to another plantation, and so asked her to direct him to the path that would lead to Colonel Jones's plantation. She said: "You follow dis path befo' you, and by and by you will come to the old black hen's nest." But he said: "I don't

know where the old black hen's nest is." "Don't you see that large bush yonder?" she answered. "That's it, and right back of it you will find a high fence. On the yuther side of the fence you will find three paths; and if you take the wrong one you'll wish you hadn't." Then she turned away and left the young man to decide for himself which one of the three paths was the correct one. It seems to me that much of the modern style of teaching, where the views of two or three learned professors are given, all of them perhaps interesting and good so far as they go, without any indication on the part of the teacher as to which is correct, is puzzling, if not misleading.

A settled conviction of the divine authority of the Word of God is nec-

essary to three things: first, for assurance of personal salvation; second, for growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and third, for power and efficiency in service. That this Word had one Author, no matter how many writers may have been employed, I believe to be true; and that this Author was divine seems plain to the simple-hearted ordinary Bible student.

I desire to present simply a single line of evidence, and that internal. There is plenty of external evidence, but this I will pass over for the present. The supreme authority of the Word of God rests on its divine authorship, and this is attested:

First, *By the direct claims of the writers in New Testament times.*

In 2 Peter i. 20, 21 (R. V.) I read this statement: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." This seems to be of first importance. And it is well for us to notice carefully that the claim is made that they "spake from God," and this is one of the simplest definitions of inspiration the Bible student can by any means find.

2 Timothy iii. 16, 17 (R. V.) reads: "All Scripture [or every Scripture], given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Hebrews i. 1, 2 (R. V.) reads: "God,

having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son." So that, according to the claim of this New Testament writer, the prophets spoke with as large authority as did the Son of God himself. This is very important.

1 Peter i. 10, 11 reads: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow." Here again the truth seems to be very plain that the prophets themselves did not fully understand the revelation which they were

making, and therefore they spake from God and not of themselves. This is further emphasized in another Scripture:

1 Thessalonians ii. 13 (R. V.): "And for this cause we also thank God, that when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe."

The early church evidently had no difficulty about authorship, and therefore no question about authority. The writers of the New Testament nowhere try to prove inspiration. They simply assume it as a fact. It is interesting to see how the early church expressed this.

Acts i. 16 reads: "Brethren, it was needful that the Scriptures should be

fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spake before by the mouth of David concerning Judas." These faithful ones, gathered together waiting for the promise of the Spirit, so quoted from the Forty-first Psalm and understood that it was the Holy Spirit speaking by the mouth of the Psalmist, rather than the poetical expression of the Psalmist.

This same idea is elsewhere illustrated, as for instance in Acts iv. 24, 25: "O Lord, thou that didst make the heaven and the earth; who by the Holy Ghost by the mouth of our father David hast said, Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up," etc. They quoted from the Second Psalm and clearly understood that it referred to the Messiah. They had a very satis-

factory definition of inspiration: *God speaking by the mouth of his servants.*

This same idea is illustrated again in Hebrews iii. 7: "Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice," etc. The quotation is from the Ninety-fifth Psalm.

As Christian workers we are apt to find many who, without looking into the claims of the Book itself, simply decide from hearsay or newspaper reports of addresses given by followers of the Higher Criticism that they do not believe in the Bible at all.

In one of our meetings I met this sort of a young man. He had remained to the after-meeting, and when I sought to deal with him he at once said: "But I don't believe in the Bible." I said: "What part of it don't you believe

in?" And he answered: "None of it." Then I said, in as kindly a way as I could summon (for I think we need to be very tender and sympathetic with just such cases as this): "Have you ever read the Bible through?" He replied: "No, sir." Then I said: "Did you ever read the Old Testament through?" And again he replied: "No, sir." Then I continued: "Have you ever read the New Testament through?" Again he answered: "No, sir." Then I said: "Did you ever read one book through?" And he answered at once: "Yes, sir." "Which one?" I asked. "Well," he said, "I am not sure; it was one of the Gospels." "How long since you read it?" And with a blush mantling his cheek, be it said to his credit, he answered: "About eight years ago."

"So," I said, "you went through one of the Gospels about eight years ago in Sunday-school, did you not?" "Who told you that?" was his question. I said: "Never mind who told me; it is a fact, is it not?" And he admitted that it was. "Now," I said, "surely you cannot recall very much in that book, can you, after eight years?" And again he admitted that he could not. Looking him in the eye I said: "My friend, just think of your position. You started out by saying that you didn't believe in any part of the Bible, and you have now admitted to me that you know nothing about it whatever, except what you may have gleaned in a haphazard sort of fashion, eight years ago, while attending Sunday-school. Now, is it fair to say that you don't believe in a thing

about which you know no more than you do about this? Let me ask a favor of you. Will you promise me that you will never again look into the face of one of your fellow-men and tell him that you do not believe in the Bible until you have read it through, or at least part of it? Will you promise me that?" And in the most manly fashion he said: "I will." This young fellow was a very interesting type of a large class of intelligent mechanics who get their theology mainly from the newspapers. About a month or two afterward, in conducting a meeting, to my great delight I saw him in the audience, and hastening to him, at the close of the meeting, I extended my hand and gave him a cordial greeting. He at once asked if I remembered him. And hav-

ing answered that I did, I asked: "Do you remember your promise to me? Have you fulfilled it?" He answered: "Yes, sir, in the main I have. A short time after our conversation together," he continued, "I borrowed a New Testament from the landlady at our boarding-house, and on an afternoon when I was unable to work, on account of the condition of the weather, I read it almost through, and later I finished the rest of it." "What was the result?" I queried. Looking at me with a face in which the very light of heaven shone he said: "You know, sir, what the result would be, as well as I do." Of course I did, and I feel sure that a great many persons who imagine themselves to be skeptical, having difficulties and doubts, could have them cured very speedily

with a good old-fashioned dose of Bible. The divine authority of the Word is also attested,

Second, *By the direct testimony of the Son of God himself.*

The Son of God, from the beginning, one with the Father. Equal in authority with the Father himself. Surely he knew whether the Old Testament Scriptures were trustworthy and authoritative. He indorsed them fully—there is no question about this in my mind. In Luke xxiv. 44 I read: "He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." Here the entire Old Testament is included, and upon its ve-

racity and authority is made to depend the genuineness of his Messiahship and resurrection. Besides indorsing the entire Old Testament he refers to and puts the seal of his approval upon the genuineness of the very things that skeptics and critics stumble over in our day. Take just a few illustrations from Scripture:

Luke xvii. 26: "As it was in the days of Noah," etc. So Jesus believed in the flood, and, without question, believed in it as universal. It is very interesting to know that in our day some of the foremost scientists have discovered indubitable proofs of the universality of the flood. Jesus put the stamp of his approval on the story of Noah and the flood.

In John iii. 14: "As Moses lifted up

the serpent in the wilderness," etc. So Jesus believed in the genuineness of the story concerning the serpent-bitten Israelites and God's remedy for their malady.

In Matthew xii. 40: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Then Jesus believed in the story given to us in the Book of Jonah. It is inconceivable that he would use a mere poetical fancy as illustrating the most stupendous fact of his own earthly career. Without doubt he intended to put the seal of his approval upon Jonah.

In Luke xvii. 32: "Remember Lot's wife." So Jesus believed in the historical accuracy of the account of the

destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and also the turning of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt.

In Luke iv. 25, 26 we have the reference to Elijah and the poor widow, and in Luke iv. 27 a reference to Naaman the Syrian, showing that Jesus believed in these things as historical verities. He used these and numerous other incidents, miraculous in their character, as historical facts. May we not safely do the same? One reason the Word of God has so much power is because it is the Spirit's chosen weapon—having all the force and power that he can give it. I conclude, therefore, that what the Scriptures say, God says; that what the Scriptures teach, God teaches. Hence it was well said of the Son of God that "he taught as one having authority."

It was the Author expounding and unfolding his own work. It is the one who speaks that carries authority.

A private in a certain engagement, seeing the wonderful opportunity before them for victory, said, so that he might be heard by several of his comrades; "We ought to charge the left flank." But not a man moved. A moment or two later the general gave the command to do this very thing, and in the forward charge victory was won. As Christian workers we will do well to realize that we may use the Word of God even as our divine Master used it, with authority. When he speaks, his word is a word of power.

THE WORKER'S WEAPON

ITS STUDY

"I have treasured up the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."—Job xxiii. 12.

Cap III

ITS STUDY

"Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God; a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth."—2 Tim. ii. 15 (R. V.).

THE word "diligence" here is translated "study" in the Authorized Version, and suggests at once a very important thing. Study, then, means not simply reading, hearing expounded, or discussing the law of the Lord, but diligent digging after these deep truths —an earnest seeking for hidden treasure.

The reading of the Word in a devotional way is a splendid exercise for any devout soul; hearing the Word expounded is certainly in accordance with God's plan; and the discussion which sometimes arises in Bible-classes is not altogether without its value: but is there not danger of falling into the very error which the Apostle Paul was trying to correct in writing this epistle to young Timothy, where in the second chapter, fourteenth verse, just preceding the text, he says: "Charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers"? All of these things are good as far as they go, but they certainly can never take the place of real study. I believe they had the right sort of spirit and industry in the Berean church (Acts

xvii. 11): "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica." And why? Because "they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so"; or as one of the other translations gives it, "day by day examining well the Scriptures." It is this day-by-day-examining-well method that is going to count. And this surely meant more than "my chapter daily." So many people seem to suppose that reading their chapter daily is about all that can reasonably be expected of them outside of the church service or, at the best, the Bible-class room. But much of this daily chapter-reading is so haphazard and superficial as to accomplish but little. I am afraid that many of us do this about as the young man did his

work when hoeing corn. He did the work so poorly that he was in the habit of setting up a stake at night so as to know where to begin in the morning. I fear that many who simply read their chapter daily would be much perplexed if they were to lose their book-mark.

I desire in this address to suggest some practical methods of getting at the treasures of the Word. It is the "how" that seems to bother a great many. One of the very first things to do is to *begin.* Do not wait for a perfect method. Begin somewhere or somehow, and find your method or formulate your plan afterward. I would suggest:

First, *Form a habit of Bible-study; not alone for others, but for personal growth as well.*

A prominent business man in the city

of Minneapolis, Minn., told me that after teaching a young men's Bible-class for a great many years he suddenly discovered that he had been spending all his time in preparation for that purpose alone, and had been starving his own soul by neglecting personal study of the Scriptures for himself.

I noticed in a large hotel where I spent a few days one summer that the management were in the habit of requiring all the waiters to be fed first before they served the guests. Is not this a good rule in spiritual things? For those who would feed others should themselves first be fed. Make this thing a specialty until the habit is formed and fixed. You ask: "Is there not danger of one becoming a hobbyist?" And I answer: "I am not afraid of students who are

hobbyists in the matter of diligently searching the old Book. But I am afraid of so-called teachers and talkers who are forever giving out but never taking in." You remember the old proverb, "Always taking out of the meal-tub, and never putting in, soon comes to the bottom."

Let this habit be formed prayerfully. If any earnest effort needs prayer, this more. You remember the prayer in Psalms cxix. 18: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." This is especially a good motto for one's study or one's book-mark; or, better still, to have constantly before one's mental vision. I imagine that as Jesus talked to the disciples as recorded in Luke xxiv., while he unfolded to them all the things written

concerning himself in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms, their burning hearts must have expressed this prayer in earnest desire, even if they did not give audible expression to it in words. And I can imagine that it was perhaps in answer to their unexpressed prayer that we read in the forty-fifth verse: "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures."

Then if this habit is to be fixed it will need much of patience and persistence. Over in Deuteronomy vi. 6–9 we have given to us a hint of how God's ancient people were to fasten the law in their hearts and have it constantly before their lives. You will remember that they were told to have it in their hearts, and to teach it diligently unto

their children. And I suppose the word diligently is used there much in the same sense as it is in the text. They were to talk of these things when they sat in the house, when they walked by the way, when they were lying down, and as they arose in the morning. And these words were to be bound as a sign upon their hands, and worn as frontlets between their eyes, and written on the posts of the house and on the gates. In other words, the habit was to be formed and fixed in their case by meditating on the law while they were sitting, walking, lying down, rising up, morning or evening, anyhow, anyway, any time, and anywhere. I think one can have no better illustration of the right spirit and industry needed for this sort of thing than in the example given us by the

industrious Apostle Paul. In Philippians iii. 8 he tells us that with him "all was to be counted loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ." In the tenth to twelfth verses he gives us a glimpse of his earnest desire in this direction. If the habit is to be formed we must stick to it year in and year out. Go at it for life. Spend spare minutes, hours, days, weeks, and even months and years, over one passage, if need be. The chief hindrances to profitable Bible study that are generally encountered may be briefly summed up in three words: indifference, indolence, and insincerity. Many are really not interested or are unwilling to pay the price. Others are willing enough to pay their money, but are not ready to do hard work. Others hesitate

because they don't want to live the truth.

Second, *Get the full scope of Bible truth by studying in outline the whole Bible.*

For two purposes—for God's approval and aggressive Christian work, as suggested by the text. Much of our scrappy, fragmentary study secures neither one nor the other. I doubt if any one will ever make any notable progress until he has mastered the great outlines of scriptural truth. And this is not difficult if only one sets about it in dead earnest. When I was upon the road, and having but very little time for anything of the sort, I nevertheless managed to master pretty thoroughly the general contents of our English Bible. I began in the simplest possible

way, taking the table of the books in the front of the Bible, satisfying myself of the character of each, bringing them together in groups, and then fastening them in the memory. After a while I began to see that there was a great general purpose manifest in the entire collection of sixty-six volumes which for convenience we have bound up in what we call the Bible. I very soon saw that the Old Testament had to do with God the Father, the Gospels with God the Son, the Acts and the Epistles with God the Spirit. Then I began to discover that God had not dealt with the world in a haphazard fashion, but that after using one plan, which resulted in failure, he seemed to undertake another. For myself, I was very soon able to discover what is commonly called dispen-

sational truth, and I am quite sure it enabled me to handle the Word of Truth to much better advantage. Following this, I found it very natural to desire to know the contents of the books, and later even to master the contents of chapters of books. And this is quite a possible thing. I know a traveling man who has mastered the contents of every chapter of from twenty to thirty or more of the sixty-six books, and is planning to master the remainder. Some such method as this marked out for yourself and persistently followed will greatly assist in handling aright the Word of Truth.

Third, *Study by sections, topics, etc.*

The study of characters and biographies is also very profitable. So much has been said concerning the study of

topics that it needs scarcely to be emphasized, yet we still find many who do not seem to understand how to go to work to do this very simple thing. Pardon another personal experience: I had been giving a series of addresses to Sunday-school teachers in one of the cities of Minnesota, and at the close of the series of addresses, as I was about to adjourn the meeting, a lady arose in the audience and asked if she might put a question. I said to her, "Certainly." And then she asked: "Will you kindly show us how to study a topic?" I confess I felt a little mortified to think that after having given five addresses I had failed to make this plain. But I thought I saw her difficulty, and so I said at once: "If you will all come and invite your friends a week hence, I shall be

present, and we will study a topic that none of us has ever studied before." When the evening came the house was crowded full of people who were very desirous of seeing the thing actually accomplished. After the opening exercises I called for topics. A number were suggested that some persons had already studied. But finally some one suggested "The Church." I confess I had never studied that as a Bible topic before; and I found no one else in the company had studied that same topic in that way, that is, as a Bible topic. Giving a small concordance which I had brought with me to a young man on one side of the room, and a Bible text-book to a young lady on the other side, I said: "We will first look into the concordance, and there find all the texts of Scripture

that contain the word 'church.' Any of them that we do not fully understand now we will lay aside for further study, and only take the passages that are plain." Turning to a large blackboard I wrote across the top of it, "The Church." Then I reserved the left-hand side for texts of Scripture, writing down the reference, with catchwords sufficient to recall the sense of the text. After putting down all the passages we were able to secure by the use of the concordance, I asked the young lady to turn to the topic "Church" in the Scripture text-book, and read to us all the texts appearing on that topic. In this way we secured some texts that did not have the word "church" in them. We found, as a result, that with the use of the concordance and text-book we had some

twelve or fifteen texts of Scripture that were clear to us. I then wrote on the opposite side of the blackboard these questions: First, What is the Church? Second, Of whom is it composed? Third, What is its position and power in the world? Fourth, What is its future? Then I let the audience decide on where to place each text of Scripture. In the end we had a very clear and satisfactory study of the Scriptures on this important topic. This is one method of studying a topic; there are many others. But I am quite sure that it opened up to many at that time a method by which they could study the Word of God, not only to their own profit, but for profitable use with others.

Then, study your Bible carefully, critically. You may not know Hebrew or

Greek, but you can use helps—a Revised Version and other translations; Young's Concordance, with its Greek and Hebrew indexes; Hudson's Critical Greek Concordance, and other books of like character. And while one may have to spend very much more time over a given passage to discover its depth of meaning than if he were an accomplished Greek or Hebrew student, he will nevertheless derive much of profit, and it will be time well spent. It is said that a very humble student of the Word many years ago went to one of our prominent teachers at the close of an address and said to him: "I am convinced, sir, from my study of the Word, that the last clause of Romans viii. 1 does not belong there, but ought of right to be found at the end of the

fourth verse," and added: "I wish you would ask some of your learned friends who may be able to get access to the manuscripts whether this is not true." Upon investigation it was proved that this man's study had led him into a correct position; and any one who will take the trouble to consult the Revised Version will find that the learned revision committee indorsed this very humble layman.

Fourth, *Some things to avoid.*

In your study do not try to prove a preconceived theory by detached scriptural references. I once found a company of Mormon elders in a community trying to do this very thing. A young man who knew his Bible very soon put them to flight. As you know, one can prove, at least to his own satisfac-

tion, almost any doctrine by using detached scriptural references. You have heard of the young man who told his grandmother that it was scriptural to commit suicide. I suppose when she offered him the Book he probably said, as this class of people generally do, "I have no need of the Bible," and then added: "Grandmother, does it not say somewhere in the Bible that Judas went out and hanged himself?" And of course the good old soul assented to this, but added: "That does not prove anything." "But, grandmother," said the young man, "does it not say somewhere else, 'Go thou and do likewise'?" And he might have added the words, "What thou doest do quickly."

Then, again, do not rest on any statement until you have carefully examined

the teaching and context. 1 Corinthians ii. 9 is a good illustration of this. How many persons have quoted the ninth verse and then settled back in a sort of happy tranquillity, with the feeling that it must of necessity be a blessed thing to be ignorant concerning the things of God! While if they had read the tenth verse they must have understood at once that a different truth entirely was intended to be taught.

And last of all, let me suggest this: Do not distort or "wrest the Scriptures." Do not expect to make a passage teach what its plain expression nowhere else teaches, or what, in the main, the volume of Bible testimony does not teach. I could not better illustrate this in closing than by referring to the very haphazard way in which many otherwise

careful students use the Word of God in reference to its teaching concerning the Jew, the Gentile, and the church, or the second coming of our Lord.

Let me just drop this one word in closing: there is no possibility of buying up results of hard work on the part of others in the matter of Bible study. Its price is diligence for thyself. Hard work is the secret of successful Bible study and thorough Bible knowledge.

THE WORKER'S WEAPON

ITS USE

"Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments."—Psalm cxix. 6.

Cap IV

ITS USE

"The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."—Eph. vi. 17.

MANY Christian workers have a considerable knowledge of the Bible, but fail somehow to make practical use of it; or, to use the figure suggested in the text, they have a sword and make a good appearance on dress-parade, but when they seek to wield it in close quarters it is either so rusted in its scabbard that they cannot make it effective, or they are unable to swing it with force and

precision. To use the sword of the Spirit wisely and well one of the very first things necessary is that the worker should get a good grip of his weapon; and here, perhaps, is where the greatest difficulty comes, for it must be taken hold of point and blade first. We shall never be able to make it cut others until we have permitted it first to cut us. I think this was the principle hinted at by our Lord in Mark viii. 34, when he said: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Unless there is first real self-denial, there can be no effective service. Let me present some suggestions concerning wise ways of wielding the worker's weapon:

First, *As used upon ourselves for spiritual life and spiritual growth.*

This is the divine order: first life, then growth. Spiritual life comes by the Spirit's use of the Word. See 1 Peter i. 23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible; by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." This seems to clearly teach that the Word of God is the Spirit's instrument in regeneration. The Spirit is the agent, and the Word the instrument.

Having life, the next thing is growth. There are at least two distinct stages of spiritual growth set forth in the Word of God.

The first stage is by food, as in young childhood—1 Peter ii. 2, 3: "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be that ye have tasted that

the Lord is gracious." The figure used here is homely but exceedingly interesting and suggestive. This food is to be "the sincere milk of the Word"—no milk-and-water mixture, but the genuine, old-fashioned country milk. When that young father and mother consulted their physician about the baby last summer, he recommended that they take it to its grandmother's in the country. As soon as grandmother saw the baby she said, "The trouble with that baby is, it is starving to death." When a little while afterward the baby took from her hands some of the good rich country milk, as it came warm from the mother cow, you could almost see the baby begin to grow. Oftentimes young Christians, in order to grow, need to be fed simply with "the sincere milk of the

Word." Fathers and mothers who have had experience in the raising of young children understand very well the wisdom of the use of this figure. At the first the young baby does not need to be set at work, but simply needs to grow by food. There will come a day when the life that is within will demand something more than this, and there will be the second stage of growth, of which I shall speak presently. The young baby needs food provided for it at first in small quantities. Anything more than this is apt to produce disarrangement and indigestion. So beginners in the Christian life do not need to be thrust out at once into Christian work or taught at one sitting all that they need to know concerning the Word. It will not suffice to spend a week at some meeting for

Bible study, or take a month's course in some institute, for this is very apt to produce spiritual dyspepsia. They are unable to digest all the food that they get in such large quantities. They need, rather, food as the baby needs it, in small quantities, and often. I suppose that every young father at least has made the mistake of supposing that a child might be filled up in the evening, and that this ought to last until morning. Generally experience has proved the unwisdom of such a course. Then, too, the food must be warm. Too often the Bible is used in a cold, perfunctory sort of fashion. Nothing can ever take the place of the warmth and life-giving presence of the Spirit. To study the Bible in cold blood is to receive it simply in an intellectual way.

But real spiritual growth will come by dependence on the life-giving Spirit of God. I remember once my wife and myself were traveling east from Chicago. We met on the sleeper a young mother who had started out from Minnesota for an eastern city with only a bottle of milk for her baby; and as this failed very soon after we left Chicago, she was in great distress as to how she might provide for the little one's needs. We were very happy to offer her a can of condensed milk. But a little while afterward you can imagine our dismay, for the porter in preparing it had used ice-water. This of course did not make a very palatable or satisfactory diet for the infant. But I imagine it was about as appropriate and no colder than some of the so-called

spiritual food that is provided for new-born babes in the spiritual life.

The next stage of growth is by exercise, and corresponds with youth. This idea seems to be presented in 1 John ii. 13, 14, and I think it gives us a hint as to how one may *get strong and stay so* spiritually. Again nature illustrates true spiritual growth. There comes a time in the child's life when it is content no longer to grow simply by food, but begins to desire to walk and exercise. Henceforth sturdy growth can only come by a proper amount of vigorous exercise. The very life within demands it. To sum this all up, it seems to me the Spirit's method of growth in the new-born soul may be put in these three words—life, food, and exercise.

Second, *As used upon others:*

First, *In public teaching and testimony.* We are to use it as if we believed it. Some one has illustrated this by the use of the figure in the text. Suppose you are using a sword in a hand-to-hand conflict, and suppose your enemy said, "I don't believe the thing you have is a sword." How would you prove it? Simply by using it upon him. So in the use of the sword of the Spirit. The best way after all to convince those who do not believe in its genuineness is not to try to prove that it is a sword, but simply to use it upon them. It will cut, therefore let us use it courageously. It is our business to use it; it is the Spirit's work to see that it cuts.

In our public teaching I believe we are to follow Paul's example, 1 Corinthians ii. 1: speak God's testimony and

witness to its truth; or as the prophet taught, Isaiah lv. 7–11: teach God's Word and not our thoughts. Jeremiah xxiii. 25–32 indicates the difference between God's thoughts and our thoughts. Nothing will so attract and hold as the simple Word of God honestly, faithfully, and lovingly presented.

I knew a young Scotchman who was given a Sunday-school class in one of the missions in a western city and when he took hold of it he was not told that four or five other teachers had utterly failed before him. They had tried stories, picture-cards, and all the methods that are supposed to attract and hold a wide-awake class of street boys, but without success. When he took hold of it he simply began by interesting these same fellows in the English Bible, and in addi-

tion to occupying their heads, after a few weeks succeeded in having in the hand of each one a Bible of his own. The result was, that at the end of the first quarter the superintendent of the school told me personally that the young man's class had the best record for attendance of any in the school.

There came under my notice another good illustration of the attractiveness of the simple use of the Word in public teaching and testimony. A young doctor, graduate of one of the leading eastern universities, a splendidly educated man, attractive in manner and appearance, took charge of a large class of young men. He brought to them many scientific facts of much interest and many new things in connection with the historical facts of the Bible, and alto-

gether a mass of information quite remarkable. But somehow or other the class dwindled and fell away almost entirely. In discouragement he resigned. Those who remained were given into the hands of a young business man who had never had any special training other than a personal study of his Bible. And he began at once by throwing out all lesson leaves, providing each member of the Bible-class with a copy of the English Bible, and teaching them the truth from a Bible standpoint. The result was, that in less than two months he had more than doubled the original attendance.

Second, *In personal Christian work.* This was our Lord's method with the inquirer—Luke xxiv. 25, etc. It was evidently the method in the early church—

Acts viii. 35, etc. It seems to be still a successful method, as illustrated by the experience of some of the most efficient workers.

A business man who has been much used of God in winning young men to Christ, told me that there came into his office one day a young man in whom he was deeply interested because of a request from his mother to look after him spiritually. After transacting some business with the young man he opened up the matter of personal religion to him, and found him intrenched in his own morality and very self-satisfied. During his conversation with him he heard nothing but I—I—I—what he had done, how good he was, etc. He said, while he was talking with him, like a flash there came into his mind this

impression: "Read to him the second chapter of Jonah." He said: "I thought there must be some mistake. That, certainly, could not be appropriate in a case of this sort. But the impression was so strong that, going over to my desk, I took out a Bible and turned to this chapter and read it slowly; and the very condition of this young man seemed to be portrayed in the reading. As I came down to the closing verses of the chapter he stopped me and said: 'Wait a moment. You have simply been presenting a picture of myself. And what I have been telling you about my condition is absolutely untrue. I am not what I have been pretending to be; my life is all wrong. Pray for me.' So," said he, "I had the joy of leading this young fellow to the feet of the Saviour."

A friend of mine, a young man and a member of one of the leading churches in a western city, was led to see the value of this method in dealing with young men, and so he made up his mind that he would fit himself and use his Bible in winning men to Christ at the evening services of his church. The result was that in one winter he was privileged to lead over twenty-seven young men in that church to Christ. One of his experiences which he told me is very interesting, and illustrates how the Spirit of God will honor the use of his Word. Going into an after-meeting one night, he saw sitting on one of the front seats a grizzly-bearded, stern-faced old man. Taking his seat alongside of him, he said: "My friend, I am glad to see you in this meeting.

I hope you are a Christian man." When the old man turned on him he said something like this: "Me a Christian? No, sir, I am not, and I don't expect I ever shall be." "But," said my friend, "why not?" And the old man replied: "Because my heart is so hard." Asking the Lord to direct him, he told me that there came into his mind at once Ezekiel ii. 19. Turning to it he showed the old man how God would take the stony heart out of his flesh, and give him a heart of flesh. And in his conversation with him he very soon had the joy of seeing tears of repentance coursing down his cheeks, and of having him accept Christ as his personal Saviour. Some time afterward my friend went to the south side of the city to look up this man. When he inquired as to his

residence of a shopkeeper near by, he was told the number of the house, but the man added: "Do you mean the old blacksmith? You had better not go there; he is one of the hardest men in this community, and he has been known to turn a great many persons very roughly away from his door. But they do say that the old man has got religion, and that he is a changed man." When my friend called upon him, he found it was a great delight to go into his home, and said while he was there the old man took down a Bible, asked him to read a few verses and lead in prayer, and then he himself followed in a simple, hearty petition that touched his heart. And so, indeed, the stony heart had been taken out, and a heart of love given to him in its place. The

Holy Spirit will delight to honor the courageous, faithful use of his own weapon, the old sword. And it is true, as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us in chapter four, verses twelve and thirteen, that "the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

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